



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Wednesday, June 19, 2002, for the purpose of meeting with the Advisory Committee on Trees to discuss a management plan for the City's Bradford Pear trees and the replacement of the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Tree.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Bob Trumbule, Advisory Committee on Trees; Bill Phelan, Assistant Director, Public Works; Karen Yoho, president, Friends of the Greenbelt Museum; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; and Amy Boyes, the Gazette.

Other Business: Mr. McLaughlin distributed a memo about the discovery that the county's tax computer program cannot accommodate a municipal tax rate carried to four decimal places. Since both the City Solicitor and the Maryland Municipal League agree that revising a tax rate after the budget adoption deadline would not be permissible, Mr. McLaughlin proposed that the City make no formal change in its \$0.6561 rate but not assess or collect the \$1,100 that would be generated by the \$0.0001. Council did not see a problem with this solution.

Mayor Davis said this work session was being held to discuss two reports from the Advisory Committee on Trees (ACT). The topic of the memorial tree was raised by a citizen and brought to Council by ACT. The other report was generated in response to a referral from Council asking ACT to develop a plan for dealing with the City's Bradford Pear trees.

Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Tree

Mr. Trumbule said the committee members agreed the tree should be replaced and that most of their discussion had centered on whether to put it in the same place and what kind of tree to plant. Mr. Phelan said he favored replacing the tree at its existing site, where legend has Eleanor Roosevelt standing to overlook the construction of Greenbelt. He said he liked the suggestion of using a legacy white ash tree from Hyde Park, which he thought would be better suited than a pine tree for this location. There was discussion throughout the meeting about what would be done by way of site preparation and improvement if a new tree were to be planted in the same place.

Mr. Turnbull spoke in favor of finding a new site that would be passed by more pedestrians than the original site; he suggested the Greenbelt Lake path. Ms. Yoho said

the Friends of the Greenbelt Museum (FOGM) would like to see a site used that could easily be tied into the walking tour, preferably at a more prominent location that would be a destination in itself. She said their first choice would be in front of the Community Center. There was discussion of the limited space in that location; Centerway opposite the Municipal Building was also discussed but was rejected as being pedestrian-unfriendly. Mr. Roberts expressed a strong preference for the Community Center lawn but, as another option, suggested enhancing the walkway from the Community Center to the Aquatic and Fitness Center and placing it there. As a way to create space at the Community Center, Mr. Phelan suggested sacrificing the ailing sycamore tree on the front lawn. Council agreed that was acceptable. Mr. Phelan said a white ash should do very well in that spot, but since the Hyde Park legacy trees are very small, it was suggested that a larger white ash be placed on the lawn. An interpretive panel will be prepared dealing with the relationship of the Roosevelts to Greenbelt. It was also agreed to maintain the original site of the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Tree and plant a Hyde Park legacy white ash there. Mr. Phelan will evaluate what work should be done on the decorative components.

It was recognized that getting both sites ready in time for October 11, 2002, might not be feasible. If necessary, the dedication of the Community Center tree could be held over for Eleanor Roosevelt Week of 2003, or it could be done at another time of year.

D.C. Area Tree Loss: Mr. Phelan distributed some satellite-based imaging on tree loss in the metropolitan area. This was prepared by an organization called American Forests.

Management of Bradford Pear Trees

Council reviewed the report. Mayor Davis commented on the advantage of having a "rational plan" rather than having to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Trumbule agreed but noted that the committee had attempted in its classification system to take situations at different locations into account, so that the eventual policy would not treat all the trees the same. He said the committee further wished to consider the overall "look" of a street, not simply replace trees on a piecemeal basis.

Several specific issues were raised. One was the provision for the Boxwood, Lakeside, and Lakewood neighborhoods that if the City recommended maintaining a Bradford Pear by bolting it but the homeowner insisted on having it removed, the City would remove it if the homeowner agreed to pay for replacement trees. Mr. Trumbule and Mr. Phelan said this was incorporated into the proposed plan based upon precedent set last year at 7 Greenway Place. Council agreed the prior event was not necessarily to be considered a precedent. Eventually, it was agreed to remove paragraphs "A" and "B" from that section. However, there was considerable discussion of issues involved in handling trees (not limited to Bradford Pears) in City right-of-way in residential areas, and Council requested that ACT consider these issues further and make recommendations. In addition to the question of who pays to remove or replace trees, some of the items brought up were: in some neighborhoods, the homeowners or homeowner associations (HOAs) planted the trees, not the City; in some instances, the City would have to override residents' preferences if it planted trees along the street (e.g., to create a streetscape); whether the City should pay for and plant trees in City right-of way at the request of residents; overall right-of-way issues; and, in general, how to increase the number of City street trees.

There was also discussion of the Ivy Lane trees and the best way to work with Capital Office Park on that. Mayor Davis suggested that once the plan becomes policy, it be circulated to the HOAs and relevant business interests, and that perhaps an opportunity can be sought to talk with Capital Office Park at that time.

Mr. McLaughlin said he thought staff should do some reworking of the document and then bring it to Council at a regular meeting in August or September to be adopted as policy.

Mr. Phelan asked that, prior to approval, Council look particularly closely at the recommendations in the proposed plan/policy for cutting trees down.

Other Business, cont'd.: Mayor Davis said Tom Dernoga, who is running for County Council, would like to have an informational meeting to learn more about Greenbelt. She agreed to do this on July 12 at 10 a.m. in the Municipal Building. Mr. McLaughlin asked that the meeting be rescheduled to the afternoon because of a conflict.

The meeting ended at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk